

Mayor's Council on Disability  
Chattanooga, Tennessee  
Meeting Minutes  
February 06, 2006

Chair Sandy Booher called the meeting of the Mayor's Council on Disability to order at 3:10pm, in room 1A of the Development Resource Center by welcoming everyone and asking them to introduce themselves. Visitors were Lizzie Huskinson, Jamie Vest, Jolene Griffin, Mary Ann Schenk, and Jim Queen.

February meeting minutes were approved with one correction. The composition of the Council will be "at least" 2/3 people with disabilities and 1/3 people without disabilities.

Ms. Booher reported on the Council officers meeting with Mayor Littlefield that was held on January 23, 2006. The Council is appreciative of the fact that the mayor is receptive to addressing issues related to disabled citizens. The officers presented issues and ideas related to people with disabilities along with the proposed composition of the Council. The mayor requested that the Council meet with the city Codes Enforcement inspectors to ensure that new events in Chattanooga and renovations are accessible.

Ms. Booher reported that more work toward expanding the Council membership has been accomplished. Twenty letters were sent to agencies representing all disabilities to invite individuals to participate. Four individual and two agency responses have been received. Siskin Children's Institute and Signal Centers have both provided names for representation on the Council.

The next agenda item was the workshop to be conducted for the city Codes Enforcement inspectors that should be considered a responsibility of the Accessibility Committee. Jill Hindman agreed to coordinate planning for the workshop, while Bea Lyons will assist with organization and scheduling of sessions. Matt Lea, liaison to the mayor's office, will also assist Council members with workshop

planning. The workshop may be scheduled for one day with concurrent sessions covering various disability issues.

Kim Williams brought up the topic of voting and accessibility. She suggested that Pam Jackson meet with the Council to discuss the Tennessee Coalition for Disabilities program for voting access. The mayor's office will follow up on the voting accessibility codes. Ms. Lyons mentioned the Chattanooga Times Free Press' article on early voting in the February 06 issue and offered to write a letter to the editor about voting accessibility. Early voting locations appear to be more accessible for voters than many of the precincts. A letter to the editor will be prepared on behalf of the Council.

Ms. Lyons reported on the mayor's meeting with the Choo Choo Chapter, HLAA (Hearing Loss Association of America, formerly SHHH). Mayor Littlefield visited with a group of approximately 25 hard of hearing people on January 15, 2006, at the Ronald McDonald House. He shared some of his experiences from his visit to China and the differences in attitudes found between the two countries. He presented some of his ideas and views from a mayoral perspective. The chapter commended him for being the first mayor to be interested in addressing concerns of disabled citizens. This fact seemed important to him and meant a great deal to the group. Accessibility of the City Commission meetings was questioned because the televised meetings are not captioned. Mr. Lea noted that access to the City Commission meeting is available by request through the city council office. Meeting agendas may be distributed via email.

Discussion of "Go-Fest" past and present was held. Ms. Hindman shared that the festival was the mayor's initiative last year to celebrate people with disabilities and to show people without disabilities things that are similar through arts, recreation and athletics. The first effort was pretty successful with approximately 3,000 persons attending. The planning committee was comprised solely of volunteers. This year Friends of the Festival (River Bend

folks) will be responsible for overseeing the process with agency representatives and people with disabilities serving to advise the Go-Fest committee. The second Go-Fest celebration will be held Saturday, September 30, 2006, at the First Tennessee Pavilion, 12:00noon until 6:00pm. Last year's celebration was considered good but was not accessible for people with hearing loss, those who do not know sign language and cannot use services of a sign language interpreter. There were no listening systems. This year if the festival is held indoors, an inductive loop system can be installed. Ms. Hindman noted that in general there was not enough representation from the disability community to the planning committee last year. Hopefully there will be larger representation of all disabilities on the committee this year to ensure better access. Matt Lea will serve as the liaison between the Mayor's Council on Disability and the Go-Fest Planning Committee. A meeting of the Go-Fest Committee has been tentatively set for Wednesday, March 22, at 10:00am, in Room 1A, Development Resource Center.

Ms. Williams announced that there is to be a State Rehabilitation travel tour to respond to questions about the State Rehabilitation Plan. That meeting will be held in Chattanooga on May 04, 2006, at the State Office Building 540 McCallie Avenue. John Harris, Director of Handicapped and Rehabilitation at Middle Tennessee State University serves as chair of the committee. She encourages everyone to attend this important meeting.

Regarding researching grant monies, Ms. Williams provided the name of Terry Smith, Director of Services for the Blind and Hard of Hearing, as a resource for possible grants. Regarding legislation, Ms. Williams also reported on her recent visit to Washington, DC, where she received three pieces of legislation that the National Federation of the Blind is working on. Even though these laws are basically for the blind citizens, they are still relevant for the Council. She reported on the Lewis Braille Community Coin legislation and stated that if it passes, the proceeds from the coins will go to braille literacy to help promote the use of braille in the blind community.

Less than 10 percent of all blind people read braille. Actually only ten percent of printed materials are available in braille today. Lewis Braille will be 200 years old in 2009, so what better way to celebrate his birth than to develop a coin in his name.

The Mayor's Press Conference is to be held Monday, March 06, at 10:30am, in Room 1A, Development Resource Center located at 1250 Market Street. (Note: press conference date has since been changed to Monday, April 03, 2006, at 10:30am.) The purpose of the press conference is to share with the greater Chattanooga area that the mayor has formed a new Council on Disability to serve as advisors to his office. Booths will be set up to show a variety of special needs equipment. Ms. Booher will provide CCT TV, a talking calculator and other small devices used by blind people. Ms. Lyons will bring special telephones and assistive listening devices used by hard of hearing people. Ms. Hindman will bring devices that assist wheelchair users. Molly Littleton from Signal Centers may set up complete display of assistive technology.

A press release is planned with cooperation between the mayor's communication office and the Council. Everyone should plan on helping to get the word out. The mayor's office will take care of media aspects, while the Council should handle individual agency contacts.

Karl Epperson reported on a transportation problem for wheelchair users riding the bus on Hixson Pike. There is no sidewalk in either direction near the Golden Coral Restaurant. People need to call CARTA to report problems with transportation and bus stops. Access by bus to the Social Security Administration offices and other out-of-the way locations can be made on the Care-A-Van.

Miscellaneous issues were discussed as the meeting was brought to a close. Mr. Lea suggested that there be some type of education incentive included in the Go-Fest celebration. Parents, kids, special education classes, teachers, and others would be included in this celebration if an education focus could be implemented. The

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suggestion was made to have children's art exhibit inviting special education classes to participate. Karl Epperson mentioned the possibility of taking a wheelchair to some of the local schools and letting the students go through the day using a wheelchair. Jennifer Nichols has started a project entitled "Digital Story Telling" where she is interviewing and producing five minute videos of people with disabilities telling their own stories. These videos should be captioned to be accessible for all disabilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 4: 15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bea Lyons

Beatrice Lyons, Vice Chair/Acting Secretary  
Mayor's Council on Disability

